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20995	7590	05/27/2008	EXAMINER	
KNOBBE MARTENS OLSON & BEAR LLP 2040 MAIN STREET FOURTEENTH FLOOR IRVINE, CA 92614			CHOI, PETER Y	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1794	
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/561,357	ARAGA ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Peter Y. Choi	1794	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 13 May 2008.
 2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-5 and 7-12 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 1-5 and 7-12 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on 19 December 2005 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ . |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>03/18/08</u> . | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ . |

NON-FINAL ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on May 13, 2008, has been entered.

Response to Amendment

2. Applicants' remarks of May 13, 2008, recite that a "recitation 'used for a floor' is added to Claims 1 and 7." Currently examined claims 1 and 7 have not been amended to recite such a use. Claims 1 and 7 only recite that the mat is "thermoformed so as to have a shape fitted to follow a floor" and that the mat is "thermoformed in a shape configured to be fitted inside a floor-of an automobile," respectively. However, based on Applicants' remarks of May 13, 2008, it is clear that Applicants are intending that the limitations recited above refer to intended use limitations, and therefore, the claims will be examined accordingly.

Status Identifiers

3. Claim 3 recites that the claim is “currently amended.” However, the claim is identical to the previously presented claim 3 of December 12, 2007. In further submissions, it appears that claim 3 should be identified as “previously presented,” unless the claim is further amended. Additionally, “currently amended” in claim 4 appears to be misspelled.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

4. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

5. Claims 1-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Regarding claims 1-5, claim 1 recites that a “recovery percentage in a folding test is conducted on the formed mat 70% or more.” It is unclear exactly what limitation is intended since the verbiage of the claim is unclear and confusing.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102/103

6. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(a) the invention was known or used by others in this country, or patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country, before the invention thereof by the applicant for a patent.

Art Unit: 1794

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which the subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

7. Claims 1-5 and 7-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) or 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over US Pub. No. 2003/0203687 to Akuzawa.

Regarding claims 1-5, Akuzawa teaches a formed mat which is thermoformed so as to have a shape fitted to follow a floor of an automobile, the formed mat comprises: a felt layer, a thermoplastic resin sheet, an elastic non-woven body which is 3.0 mm or more in thickness, 300 g/m² or more in weight per unit area, and less than 0.20 g/cm³ in density, and a wear resistance surface layer integrally formed on a surface of the elastic non-woven body, wherein the elastic non-woven body is layered on the thermoplastic resin sheet so that the wear resistance surface layer directs to the inside of the room of the automobile, and the thermoplastic resin sheet is layered between the felt layer and the non-woven body (see entire document including paragraphs 0002, 0008-0019, 0030-0037, 0040-0053, 0065-0067, 0072-0074). It should be noted that for purposes of examination, since the surface layer is integrally formed on a surface of the non-woven body, the surface layer and the non-woven body are considered as one structure.

Regarding claims 1-5, Akuzawa does not appear to specifically teach that the nonwoven is elastic and that a recovery percentage in a folding test is conducted on the formed mat 70% or more, wherein the recovery percentage denotes a ratio of an open angle around a folding line at a time when the formed mat is supported at the folding line and is left alone after the formed mat is folded over by 180 degrees around a straight line so as to face portions of the thermoplastic resin sheet to each other, to an original 180 degrees. However, Akuzawa appears to teach a non-woven body which is substantially similar in structure and composition (non-woven body comprising polyester fibers and low-melting polyester fibers with the claimed weight percentages, fiber length and fiber diameter) as the claimed non-woven body and as described in Applicants' specification. Therefore, the claimed elasticity appears to be inherent to the fibers comprising the non-woven body. Additionally, although the prior art does not disclose the recovery percentage property, the claimed property is deemed to be inherent to the structure in the prior art since the Akuzawa reference teaches an invention with a substantially similar structure and chemical composition (a thermoformed mat comprising an elastic non-woven body with the claimed structure and specifications) as the claimed invention. Properties are the same when the structure and composition are the same. The burden is on the Applicants to prove otherwise.

Regarding claims 2-5, the elastic non-woven body is a needle punched non-woven body which has polyester fibers of 50-99% by weight and polyester-based low melting point fibers of 1 to 50% by weight, the polyester fibers having a fiber diameter of 3 to 15 dtex and a length of 40 to 120 mm, and the polyester-based low melting point fibers having a fiber diameter of 3 to 12 dtex and a length of 40 to 90 mm (paragraphs 0031-0036, 0040-0046).

Regarding claim 3, the needle punched non-woven body contains, as the polyester fibers, two or more types of fibers having different fiber diameters (paragraphs 0031-0036, 0040-0046).

Regarding claim 4, a surface layer having wear resistance is formed in the needle punched non-woven body (paragraphs 0043-0050).

Regarding claim 5, Akuzawa does not appear to specifically teach that the fibers constituting the surface layer having wear resistance have a color tone different from that of fibers constituting other portions of the needle punched non-woven body, and a decorative pattern is formed by partially taking out the fibers constituting the other portions of the needle punched non-woven body onto a surface of the surface layer having wear resistance. However, Akuzawa teaches that a dope-dying fiber may be used as fibers forming the fiber sheet to improve a design property and that a gradient structure is contemplated (paragraphs 0041, 0046-0049). Since the surface material of Akuzawa may comprise various fibers including binder fibers, and since various fibers inherently have different color tones, the claimed limitation appears to be inherent to the structure of the fibers of Akuzawa. Additionally, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the interior material art at the time the invention was made to form the invention of Akuzawa and varying the fibers, as Akuzawa suggests various fibers suitable for the invention of Akuzawa and choosing a known commercially available material as suggested by the reference to improve a design property is within the ordinary level of skill in the art.

Akuzawa appears to teach a substantially similar structure and composition as the claimed invention, including providing for a decorative design (for example, paragraph 0041). Additionally, the limitation requiring that a decorative pattern is formed by partially taking out

the fibers constituting the other portions of the needle punched non-woven body onto a surface of the surface layer having wear resistance appears to be a product by process limitation. Absent a showing to the contrary, it is Examiner's position that the article of the applied prior art (a thermoformed mat comprising an elastic non-woven body with the claimed structure and specifications) is identical to or only slightly different than the claimed article. Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process. The burden has been shifted to Applicants to show unobvious difference between the claimed product and the prior art product. The applied prior art either anticipated or strongly suggested the claimed subject matter. It is noted that if Applicants intend to rely on Examples in the specification or in a submitted declaration to show unobviousness, Applicants should clearly state how the Examples of the present invention are commensurate in scope with the claims and how the Comparative Examples are commensurate in scope with the applied prior art.

Regarding claims 7-12, Akuzawa teaches a formed mat thermoformed in a shape configured to be fitted inside a floor-of an automobile, comprising: a felt layer, an elastic non-woven body for sound absorption having a thickness of 3.0 mm or more, a weight of 300 g/m² or more, and a density of less than 0.20 g/cm³, a wear resistance surface layer integrally formed on one surface of the elastic non-woven body, and a thermoplastic resin sheet for sound isolation which is formed between the other surface of elastic non-woven body which is opposite of the

surface having the wear resistance layer integrally formed on and the felt layer, the thermoplastic resin sheet being thinner than the elastic non-woven body (see entire document including paragraphs 0002, 0008-0019, 0030-0037, 0040-0053, 0065-0067, 0072-0074). It should be noted that for purposes of examination, since the surface layer is integrally formed on a surface of the non-woven body, the surface layer and the non-woven body are considered as one structure.

Regarding claims 7-12, Akuzawa does not appear to specifically teach that the nonwoven body is elastic and that a recovery percentage of 70% or more of the formed mat as measured by a folding test in which a test piece of the formed mat is bent on a folding line until portions of the thermoplastic resin sheet touch each other, and an angle α formed at the folding line between the portions of the thermoplastic resin sheet is measured after releasing the bent test piece, wherein the recovery percentage is expressed as $\alpha/180^\circ \times 100$. However, Akuzawa appears to teach a non-woven body which is substantially similar in structure and composition (non-woven body comprising polyester fibers and low-melting polyester fibers with the claimed weight percentages, fiber length and fiber diameter) as the claimed non-woven body and as described in Applicants' specification. Therefore, the claimed elasticity appears to be inherent to the fibers comprising the non-woven body. Additionally, although the prior art does not disclose the recovery percentage property, the claimed property is deemed to be inherent to the structure in the prior art since the Akuzawa reference teaches an invention with a substantially similar structure and chemical composition (a thermoformed mat comprising an elastic non-woven body with the claimed structure and specifications) as the claimed invention. Properties are the same

when the structure and composition are the same. The burden is on the Applicants to prove otherwise.

Regarding claims 8-11, the elastic non-woven body is needle punched and comprises 50-99% by weight of polyester fibers having a fiber diameter of 3 to 15 dtex and a length of 40 to 120 mm and 1 to 50% by weight of polyester-based low melting point fibers having a fiber diameter of 3 to 12 dtex and a length of 40 to 90 mm (paragraphs 0031-0036, 0040-0046).

Regarding claim 9, the non-woven body contains, as the regular polyester fibers, two or more types of fibers having different fiber diameters (paragraphs 0031-0036, 0040-0046).

Regarding claim 10, the non-woven body further comprises a surface layer having wear resistance (paragraphs 0002, 0008-0019, 0030-0037, 0040-0053, 0065-0067, 0072-0074).

Regarding claim 11, Akuzawa does not appear to specifically teach that the fibers constituting the surface layer having wear resistance have a color tone different from that of fibers constituting other portions of the non-woven body, and a decorative pattern is formed by partially taking out the fibers constituting the other portions of the non-woven body onto the surface of the surface layer having wear resistance. However, Akuzawa teaches that a dope-dying fiber may be used as fibers forming the fiber sheet to improve a design property and that a gradient structure is contemplated (paragraphs 0041, 0046-0049). Since the surface material of Akuzawa may comprise various fibers including binder fibers, and since various fibers inherently have different color tones, the claimed limitation appears to be inherent to the structure of the fibers of Akuzawa. Additionally, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the interior material art at the time the invention was made to form the invention of Akuzawa and varying the fibers, as Akuzawa suggests various fibers suitable for the invention of

Akuzawa and choosing a known commercially available material as suggested by the reference to improve a design property is within the ordinary level of skill in the art.

Akuzawa appears to teach a substantially similar structure and composition as the claimed invention, including providing for a decorative design (for example, paragraph 0041). Additionally, the limitation requiring that a decorative pattern is formed by partially taking out the fibers constituting the other portions of the needle punched non-woven body onto a surface of the surface layer having wear resistance appears to be a product by process limitation. Absent a showing to the contrary, it is Examiner's position that the article of the applied prior art (a thermoformed mat comprising an elastic non-woven body with the claimed structure and specifications) is identical to or only slightly different than the claimed article. Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself.

Regarding claim 12, the mat further comprises a felt layer layered underneath the thermoplastic resin sheet (paragraphs 0002, 0008-0019, 0030-0037, 0040-0053, 0065-0067, 0072-0074).

Regarding claims 1-5 and 7-12, in the event it is shown that Akuzawa does not appear to specifically teach that the mat has a shape fitted to follow a floor of an automobile or configured to be fitted inside a floor-of an automobile, it should be noted that the limitations appear to be intended use limitations, based on Applicants' remarks of May 13, 2008. A recitation of the intended use of the claimed invention must result in a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art in order to patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art. If the prior art structure is capable of performing the intended use, then it meets the claim.

Since the prior art appears to teach a substantially similar structure and composition (a thermoformed mat comprising an elastic non-woven body with the claimed structure and specifications) as the claimed invention, it appears that the invention of the prior art is capable of the claimed intended uses.

In the event it is shown that Akuzawa does not disclose the claimed invention with sufficient specificity, the invention is obvious because Akuzawa discloses the claimed constituents and discloses that they may be used in combination.

Response to Arguments

8. Applicants' arguments filed May 13, 2008, have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicants appear to argue that since rigidity is required for the base layer material in Akuzawa, and since resin felt is made of fibers that are compressed and joined with hardening binder, Akuzawa does not exhibit elasticity as a whole. Additionally, Applicants argue that the "elasticity as a whole" derives a superiority in use for floor cover.

Regarding Applicants' arguments, Examiner respectfully disagrees. It should be noted that the claimed invention does not recite "elasticity as a whole." Therefore, Applicants' arguments do not appear to be commensurate in scope with the claimed invention. Additionally, it is well-settled that unsupported arguments are not a substitute for objective evidence. Akuzawa teaches a mat comprising a felt layer, a thermoplastic resin sheet and a nonwoven body, which is presumably elastic, with a surface layer, wherein the mat is arranged substantially similar if not identical to the claimed invention. Although Akuzawa does not appear to specifically teach the claimed properties regarding recovery, it should be noted that Applicants

appear to have developed a folding test independent of previously utilized tests for elasticity. Therefore, it would be unreasonable to presume that prior art mats teach the properties associated with the folding test apparently developed for the claimed invention. However, since the prior art appears to teach a substantially similar structure and composition (a thermoformed mat comprising an elastic non-woven body with the claimed structure and specifications) as the claimed invention, it appears that the invention of the prior art would inherently comprise the claimed characteristics and properties.

Applicants argue that rigidity is required in the base material, however Akuzawa teaches that the “base material is not particularly limited, so long as it can add, *for example*, a heat resistance, a rigidity, *or* a dimensional stability” (Akuzawa, paragraph 0065) (emphasis added). Therefore, rigidity is not necessarily required and, in any event, Akuzawa does not teach absolute rigidity such that the invention is not capable of flexibility. Additionally, Applicants argue that the resin felt is necessarily formed of fibers that are compressed and joined with hardening binder. However, Akuzawa does not teach that a resin felt is necessarily formed of fibers that are compressed and joined with a hardening binder, and that the resin felt must necessarily be absolutely rigid. For example, USPN 5,108,826 to Fujiki teaches that it was known in the art to form a resin felt suitable for use as an interior material for cars which exhibits flexural rigidity (Fujiki, column 1 lines 5-53, column 5 line 63 to column 6 line 64). Additionally, Applicants do not provide evidence that all resin felts are necessarily formed of fibers that are compressed and joined with a hardening binder.

Regarding Applicants’ argument that the “elasticity as a whole” derives a superiority in use for floor cover, Examiner respectfully disagrees. As set forth above, it should be noted that

the claimed invention does not recite “elasticity as a whole.” Applicants appear to be arguing that since Akuzawa teaches that the invention can be used as a headlining, a pillar, a door trim or a rear package, and materials for those uses typically have characteristics such as stiffness such that the material does not hang in folds or deform due to its own weight, the invention of Akuzawa necessarily has stiffness such that the material does not hang in folds or deform due to its own weight. However, Applicants are imputing characteristics to the prior art invention without objective evidence that such characteristics necessarily exist in the prior art invention and that such characteristics distinguish the prior art invention from the claimed invention. Additionally, since the prior art appears to teach a substantially similar structure and composition (a thermoformed mat comprising an elastic non-woven body with the claimed structure and specifications) as the claimed invention, it appears that the invention of the prior art would inherently comprise the claimed characteristics and properties.

It should be noted that Applicants’ specification teaches that the claimed invention may be used as “a door panel, a luggage panel, a dash panel, a roof panel, and the like as well as a floor panel of an automobile” (*see* Applicants’ specification, page 6). Applicants’ arguments that headlining, pillar, door trim or rear packages inherently possess characteristics that distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art invention are not persuasive as Applicants’ invention appears to be suitable for substantially similar uses as the prior art invention.

Akuzawa teaches that the base material is not particularly limited so long as it can add, for example, a heat resistance, a rigidity or a dimensional stability to the mat. Additionally, the structure and composition of Akuzawa appears to be substantially similar to the claimed invention. Although Akuzawa does not specifically teach the claimed recovery characteristic

properties, absent evidence to the contrary, the claimed properties appear to be inherent to the invention of Akuzawa. Therefore, Applicants arguments are not persusasive.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

9. Claims 1-5 and 7-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Akuzawa in view of USPN 5,677,027 to Masuda.

Regarding claims 1-5 and 7-12, in the event it is shown that Akuzawa does not appear to teach an elastic non-woven body, Masuda teaches that it was known in the automobile insulating material art to form a substantially similar structure and composition as Akuzawa, wherein the cushioning layer is a non-woven body comprising first fibers and bonding fibers, the first fibers and bonding fibers comprising substantially similar compositions and weight percentages as those disclosed in Akuzawa, wherein the bonding fibers comprise elastic copolyester (Masuda, column 1 lines 5- 11, column 2 lines 33-62, column 3 lines 16-45, column 4 line 22 to column 6 line 67). Masuda teaches various advantages due to the inclusion of elastic copolyester fibers such as superior damping effect, improved sound transmission loss, superior sound insulation and adequate cushioning effect. Similarly, Akuzawa teaches that an object of the invention of Akuzawa is to provide an automobile surface material with excellent sound absorption property (*see* Akuzawa, paragraphs 0010, 0018). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the automobile insulating material art at the tine the invention was made to form the automobile insulating material of Akuzawa, wherein the bonding fibers comprise elastic copolyester, as taught by Masuda, motivated by the desire of forming a conventional automobile insulating

material having a superior damping effect, improved sound transmission loss, superior sound insulation and adequate cushioning effect due to the inclusion of elastic copolyester, and the combination of the elastic copolyester fibers and polyester fibers in a nonwoven fabric was known in the automobile insulating material art and the results predictable from such a combination.

Regarding claims 1-5 and 7-12, although Akuzawa in view of Masuda does not appear to teach the claimed recovery percentages, the claimed recovery percentages are deemed to be inherent to the prior art combination since the prior art combination teaches a substantially similar structure and composition as the claimed invention, absent evidence to the contrary.

Response to Arguments

10. Applicants' arguments filed May 13, 2008, have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicants argue that it is inoperable to combine the sound insulating structure of Masuda with Akuzawa since Masuda is for an automobile floor. Additionally, Applicants argue that the thermoplastic resin sheet is disposed on the interior of the elastic nonwoven body which is opposite to the present invention, and a resulting quiet interior can not be achieved as effective as the present invention.

Regarding Applicants' arguments, Examiner respectfully disagrees. Applicants argue that the prior art references are not combinable since Masuda teaches an automobile floor. However, Applicants do not provide objective evidence supporting such an assertion. Additionally, Masuda teaches that the invention is a sound insulating structure *suitable* as an automobile insulating floor carpet, not that the invention of Masuda is only capable of use as an automobile

floor (*see* Masuda, column 2 lines 33-38). Additionally, Masuda is only relied on to teach that it was known in the automobile insulating material art to form a substantially similar structure and composition as Akuzawa, wherein the cushioning layer is a non-woven body comprising first fibers and bonding fibers, the first fibers and bonding fibers comprising substantially similar compositions and weight percentages as those disclosed in Akuzawa, wherein the bonding fibers comprise elastic copolyester. Applicants have not provided evidence that the elastic copolyester fibers of Masuda are not capable of use in the surface material structure of Akuzawa, wherein the invention of Akuzawa similarly contemplates sound absorption (*see* Akuzawa, paragraph 0018).

Regarding Applicants' arguments that the resin sheet of Masuda is opposite to the present invention and that a resulting quiet interior can not be achieved, Examiner respectfully disagrees. As set forth above, Masuda is only relied on to teach that it was known in the automobile insulating material art to form a substantially similar structure and composition as Akuzawa, wherein the cushioning layer is a non-woven body comprising first fibers and bonding fibers, the first fibers and bonding fibers comprising substantially similar compositions and weight percentages as those disclosed in Akuzawa, wherein the bonding fibers comprise elastic copolyester. Additionally, Applicants are not claiming a resulting quiet interior or a value associated with a resulting quiet interior. Applicants only appear to be making subjective inferences regarding the prior art combination juxtaposed with the claimed invention, without providing objective evidence supporting such an assertion. Therefore, Applicants' arguments are not persuasive.

Conclusion

11. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Peter Y. Choi whose telephone number is (571)272-6730. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday, 08:00 - 15:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Terrel Morris can be reached on (571) 272-1478. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Andrew T Piziali/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1794

/Peter Y Choi/
Examiner, Art Unit 1794